

# PARKING REDUCTION REPORT

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PLANNING & INSPECTIONS DEPARTMENT

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1/22/2018

The City Plan Commission has shown reticence in forwarding positive recommendations to City Council on recent parking reduction requests. This report has been prepared in order to address the concerns recently expressed by the Commission and to provide direction on potential procedural changes, application requirements, or code amendments that will better promote the public health, safety, morals, and general welfare, while also fulfilling the goals of Plan El Paso. In the preparation of this report, staff researched the current parking reduction procedures of other Texas cities, as well as best planning practices nationwide.

## PLAN EL PASO

Plan El Paso is consistent in its guidance on the topic of parking. One of the primary goals of the Plan is to ensure a safe and walkable community for all users. It describes surface parking lots as a common impediment to walkability due to the safety hazards and inconvenience they can introduce for pedestrians and other transportation modes, as well as their often-poor aesthetic value. Plan El Paso advocates for greater use of shared parking facilities and on-street parking, and explicitly discourages the provision of surface parking between building façades and the street.

## EL PASO'S EXISTING PARKING REDUCTION MECHANISMS

El Paso has several existing mechanisms that allow for parking reductions, some of which are administrative and some of which require public hearings. These mechanisms are percentage-based; any reduction request of 10% or greater will require a public hearing, either through the Zoning Board of Adjustments (requests from 10% to 15%), or by the CPC and City Council (requests greater than 15%). For each mechanism, specific standards must be met and application materials provided. Because the processes are tied to percentage values, uses requiring a small number of parking spaces are disproportionately affected. For example, a use requiring three spaces and proposing two would always have to get City Council approval for a reduction of one space (33% reduction), whereas a use requiring 500 spaces but seeking a reduction of 50 spaces could potentially be granted administrative approval (9% reduction).

## **BEST PRACTICES**

Parking reduction requests are not unique to the City of El Paso. Cities across the country that are promoting walkable development use a variety of strategies to allow the adaptive reuse of buildings to proceed despite on-site space constraints that can limit their ability to meet parking requirements. Cities also face pushback against making changes to regulations when there is a public perception that the best solution to parking issues is simply greater supply.

Planning staff research suggests that El Paso's approach to parking reduction requests is generally consistent with the approaches used by other large Texas cities. Staff reviewed the parking reduction mechanisms employed by the cities of Austin, College Station, Dallas, Fort Worth, Galveston, Houston, Laredo, and San Antonio. Of these cities, Austin and College Station offer the most robust selection of relief mechanisms. Austin provides for the utilization of on-street parking and shared parking, while College Station allows for consideration of an alternative parking plan which may propose a variety of strategies to address parking demand.

## **POTENTIAL MODIFICATIONS TO EXISTING REQUIREMENTS**

There are several alternatives to the City's current parking reduction approaches that could be employed. These alternatives include possible changes to processes and the type and amount of support documentation provided by applicants, as well as substantial changes to the regulations governing parking reductions. The City may also consider changing how parking supply is regulated at a more fundamental level.

# INTRODUCTION

In 2017, the City Plan Commission (CPC) raised new concerns about the appropriateness of requests for reduction of minimum parking requirements. During 2017, the CPC heard four requests for parking reductions, and failed to advance three to City Council with an approval recommendation. One such case received a denial recommendation, while two cases received no recommendation from the Commission because of split votes.

The City received 172 Special Permit applications from 2013 to 2017; 34 of these applications (about 20%) have included parking reduction requests. Of those 34, 29 have been heard to date by the CPC. A majority (17) of those requested a reduction of ten spaces or fewer, and, excluding three reduction requests of more than 50 spaces each, the average reduction request per case was 12 spaces.

Because of the concerns raised by the Commission regarding these cases, staff researched adopted policy language in Plan El Paso and the City's Zoning Ordinance, and compared our requirements to those of other cities in the State of Texas, as well as national best practices. The public perception of a lack of parking, and how municipal regulations perpetuate that perception, is discussed, along with the strategies now being advocated by planning professionals to resolve these problems. The findings of that research are compiled here and have been used to develop alternative approaches for future parking reduction requests that may assist the Commission in providing recommendations.

# PLAN EL PASO ON PARKING REDUCTIONS

## DISCUSSION

Plan El Paso discusses parking strategies in multiple places. The Plan advocates for the separation of parking supply from the uses generating demand, and recommends utilizing shared parking facilities and on-street parking to accommodate the parking needs for a block or neighborhood. The Plan references specific detrimental impacts related to the proliferation of large surface parking lots. The Plan describes these lots as a poor utilization of urban land, particularly when an oversupply is driven by excessive or poorly focused municipally enforced minimums. The Plan also describes the deleterious effect that surface lots have on pedestrian connectivity and comfort, and the difficulty of creating successful urban developments when regulations prioritize automobiles. Plan El Paso makes several recommendations to lessen the negative impacts of parking on neighborhoods and commercial/mixed-use districts, concerning both the careful placement of parking lots and reduction of required spaces. The Plan encourages the sharing of consolidated parking facilities and improving access to alternative transportation modes to reduce the number of trips made by car.

The language concerning parking in Plan El Paso exists in the service of a larger goal of the Plan, which is to create a City whose amenities and services are accessible by all people, regardless of their access to cars.

*“Encourage infill development within the existing City over peripheral expansion to conserve environmental resources, spur economic investment, repair social fabric, reduce the cost of providing infrastructure and services, and reclaim abandoned areas.”*

*—Plan El Paso, Chapter 1 (Regional Land Use Patterns) Overall Goal*

The adaptive reuse of existing buildings in older neighborhoods, particularly in Central El Paso, is encouraged as a strategy to achieve this goal. The neighborhoods of Central El Paso were built before the automobile became the primary mode of transportation, and were originally designed to prioritize pedestrians and transit. As a result, it can often be challenging or impossible for properties in these neighborhoods to meet current parking regulations, given the relatively small lot sizes.

When existing structures in older neighborhoods cannot be repurposed for new uses due to their inability to meet current parking requirements, developers are forced to either demolish existing buildings to accommodate the required parking, or pursue the project on a property with fewer constraints. Since the properties that can more easily meet parking requirements are located in areas developed after the rise of the automobile, the City’s parking requirements tend to discourage redevelopment of older, more urban areas, while simultaneously encouraging further development of newer, more suburban areas. Furthermore, enforcing current parking requirements in older areas can disrupt established neighborhood character by causing breaks in the consistent alignment of buildings, and the addition of new curb-cuts, driveways, and parking lots adjacent to the sidewalk can degrade the pedestrian experience and create safety and accessibility problems for alternative transportation modes. When regulations prioritize development at the periphery, the result is an endlessly expanding City that cannot adequately provide access to those using alternative transportation, as well as the constant expansion of new infrastructure that the City must maintain in perpetuity.

## **SPECIFIC REFERENCES TO PARKING IN PLAN EL PASO**

**CHAPTER 1 – REGIONAL LAND USE PATTERNS.** In this chapter, Plan El Paso identifies large surface parking lots as an impediment to walkability, and recommends the utilization of on-street parking and shared parking facilities. In the design guidance for Future Land Use Map designations G-2 (Traditional Neighborhood) and G-3 (Post War), Plan El Paso states that empty parking lots should be replaced with street-oriented buildings, and that parking should be consolidated and shared between multiple uses within districts. The G-2 and G-3 designations generally apply to Central El Paso, much of the Northeast, and large swaths of the Near East Side.

**CHAPTER 2 – URBAN DESIGN.** This chapter argues that the management of parking is the greatest determinant of urban design in El Paso today. It states that parking lots located between buildings and the sidewalk make alternative transportation modes less convenient, more dangerous, and more uncomfortable. It advocates for parking demands to be satisfied on-street, in shared parking facilities, and at the rear or middle of urban blocks. The City should work to decouple parking from being satisfied 100% on-site and instead provide shared facilities that consolidate necessary parking. Policy 2.4 states that no more than 20% of any individual lot should be devoted to parking, a goal that indicates a significant departure from most existing commercial development within the City, and would require the utilization of the strategies mentioned in this plan to achieve.

**CHAPTER 3 – DOWNTOWN.** In this chapter, it is noted that many street-oriented buildings in the downtown area have been replaced by surface parking lots and single-use parking garages, degrading the pedestrian experience of downtown. This chapter again encourages parking to be located on-street and behind buildings, in mid-block lots or in parking garages lined with other uses. The zoning regulations for the City of El Paso allow for a 100% parking reduction by right for properties downtown, which is in keeping with this goal.

**CHAPTER 4 – TRANSPORTATION.** This chapter reaffirms previous discussion about the impact of excessive parking supply, and the care that should be taken in siting parking. It contains three policies that specifically address managing parking demand, arguing that effective management of existing parking supply is more cost-effective than the development of additional capacity. This chapter reiterates the importance of ensuring the availability of on-street parking, placing parking behind buildings, and utilizing existing parking resources efficiently. It states that if reducing the available supply causes spillover parking into residential districts, neighborhood parking districts can be created using the existing processes in El Paso City Code section 12.44.280.

# CITY OF EL PASO EXISTING PARKING REDUCTION MECHANISMS

The City of El Paso has several existing mechanisms to provide relief from parking requirements. All applications, except for shared parking agreements and legal nonconforming registration, are based, in part, on the percentage of parking reduction requested. Additionally, in May of 2016, parking requirements for all uses were reduced by 20% via Ordinance 18498.

Because the requirements are percentage-based, a use requiring a small number of parking spaces will almost always require a special permit to be approved by City Council. For instance, if a use requires three spaces, and two are proposed, the reduction request would be for 33%, which exceeds the requirements of administrative and Zoning Board of Adjustments approvals. However, a conversion of an existing building to a use that requires 500 spaces could seek administrative approval for a reduction of fifty spaces (a 10% reduction). Special Permits typically take approximately five months to process and have total application costs that would likely exceed \$3,000, when factoring in the documents that are required. Administrative parking reduction requests do not have a fee associated with them, and are typically completed within ten working days.

## SUMMARY OF EXISTING PARKING REDUCTION MECHANISMS

	REDUCTION THRESHOLD	CODE SECTION
<b>ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVAL</b>	<b>0 – 10%</b> Change in use only, no expansion of building	<b>20.14.070.D</b> • <i>Criteria: 2 a-e</i>
<b>ADMINISTRATIVE SUBSTITUTION</b>	<b>0 – 10%</b> Substitute bicycle spaces (6) for vehicular (1)	<b>20.14.130</b>
<b>ZBA APPROVAL</b>	<b>0 – 15%</b> With written approval of City Traffic Engineer	<b>2.16.050.I</b> • <i>Criteria: 1-3</i>
<b>SPECIAL PERMIT</b>	<b>0 – 100% (Automatic 50% w/Infill)</b> Request cannot be due to expansion into an area that previously provided parking unless the Infill Special Permit Standards are met.	<b>20.14.070.A; 20.10.280</b> • <i>Criteria: A 1-4</i> • <i>Application Requirements: C 1-3</i>
<b>SHARED PARKING AGREEMENT</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>20.14.060</b> • <i>Criteria: B 1-5</i> • <i>Application Requirements: A</i>
<b>LEGAL NONCONFORMING REGISTRATION</b>	<b>AS LEGALLY ESTABLISHED</b>	<b>20.22</b> • <i>Criteria: 20.22.040 A 2</i> • <i>Application Requirements: 20.22.070</i>



## DETAILED INFORMATION

**ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVAL.** Administrative Approval of parking reduction requests is only allowed for changes of use in existing buildings, and is not allowed for new construction or additions. The maximum threshold that can be requested is 10%. The typical processing time for these applications is ten working days. These are typically processed in conjunction with the building permit for the particular development.

**Application Requirements.** In order to receive an administrative parking reduction, a written request must be submitted to the Zoning Administrator. The proposed use must be indicated in the request. The request also must include a site plan showing the location and arrangement of structures and the parking configuration, as well as letters from the abutting property owners stating that they do not object to the parking reduction.

**ADMINISTRATIVE SUBSTITUTION.** Administrative Substitutions granted by the Zoning Administrator, per El Paso City Code Section 20.14.130, can be requested for new and existing buildings and facilities. Through this mechanism, the applicant may substitute up to ten percent of their required vehicular spaces for additional bicycle parking at a rate of six bicycle spaces per vehicular space. This rate of exchange is above the standard minimum bicycle space requirement. The typical processing time for these applications is ten working days. These are typically processed in conjunction with the building permit for the particular development.

**Application Requirements.** In order to receive an administrative parking substitution, a written request must be submitted to the Zoning Administrator. The proposed use must be indicated in the request. The request also must include a site plan showing the location and arrangement of structures and the parking configuration; and must also include location of the proposed bicycle facilities with the calculation provided of required and proposed.

**ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENTS SPECIAL EXCEPTION.** The maximum reduction approved through the Zoning Board of Adjustments is 15%. It should be noted that this can be combined with administrative approvals to raise the amount of parking that can be reduced without requiring a Special Permit (up to 35% total). Zoning Board of Adjustments Special Exceptions can be used for both building expansions and new construction. A \$750.52 application fee is required. Additionally, applicants must have site plans drawn as part of the submittal requirements, which does impose an additional expense. Zoning Board of Adjustments approval typically takes approximately six weeks.

**Application Requirements.** Applicants are required to submit a completed Zoning Board of Adjustments application and fee. They must also demonstrate through testimony or documentation that they cannot reasonably accommodate the required number of off-street parking spaces on the subject property. This is typically accomplished through a site plan depicting the proposed arrangement of structures and parking.

The City Traffic Engineer also reviews these requests and may require a parking study in order to determine the impact on surrounding properties. Parking studies consist of hourly counts taken over a specified time period as determined by staff. This is generally twelve or twenty-four hours, but can be up to one week. The parking study includes the 300 feet surrounding the subject property; only unrestricted on-street parking is considered.

**SPECIAL PERMIT.** Special Permits for parking reductions have an application cost between \$731.40 and \$1,091, depending on the size of the parcel. They require a detailed site development plan that has the seal of a professional engineer or architect, as well as submission a parking study. Because interdepartmental review and multiple public hearings are required, the typical processing time for these applications is at least five months.

There are two types of special permits that can be used to reduce the required parking for a proposed development: a parking reduction special permit and an infill development special permit.

**Parking Reduction Special Permits.** A parking reduction special permit can be used for development within existing older or redevelopment areas of the City. For existing development, the reduction request cannot be necessitated by an expansion onto an area of the property that previously provided parking. Since most parking lots in the City are between the front property line and the structure, this does not allow for additions that would bring existing development into better alignment with the goals and policies of Plan El Paso.

**Infill Development Special Permits for Parking Reduction.** Infill Development Special Permits allow for development on vacant and underutilized parcels in older areas of the City. They allow for density increases, setback encroachments, and parking reductions. They have strict design criteria tied to the design recommendations in Plan El Paso to ensure compliance with the intent of this relief mechanism. An automatic 50% reduction is granted through the Infill Special Permit process and an applicant can request up to a 100% reduction.

**Application Requirements.** Applicants are required to submit a Special Permit application and fee. They also must submit a detailed site development plan (DSDP) that has the seal of a professional engineer or architect registered in the State of Texas. The DSDP shows the proposed location and arrangement of structures and the configuration of parking. It also shows the location of drainage, landscaping, fences, and building configuration. Tables showing required parking and landscaping are required. For Infill Development Special Permits, the DSDP must also clearly demonstrate the mandatory and selective design criteria with which the proposal complies.

Applicants are required to submit a letter from the director of Sun Metro stating that transit service is available within 1,000 feet of a subject property. Applicants must also submit a parking study.

Additionally, all applications for public hearing by City Council are required to provide proof of ownership, a metes and bounds description and survey of the property if unplatted or consisting of portions of previously platted lots, proof that notice has been sent to recognized neighborhood associations, and other documentation. If the subject property is larger than one acre, applicants are required to install, at their expense, one or more large public notification signs alerting the public to their special permit application.

**LEGAL NONCONFORMING REGISTRATION.** Legal Nonconforming Registration can allow an existing parking configuration to remain when it does not meet current standards. If the use changes to one that requires more parking than the use considered in the legal nonconforming registration, or if the current use increases in intensity, the property must provide for the additional demand. Legal nonconforming registration applications require a fee of \$90.08 and typically are processed within ten business days.

**Application Requirements.** Applicants are required to provide Legal Nonconforming Registration application and fee. They must include a site plan showing the location and arrangement of structures and parking configuration, as well as proof of the lawful establishment of the use. Because the current zoning ordinance was adopted in 1955, proof that a use was established before then is considered sufficient demonstration of lawful establishment.

**SHARED PARKING AGREEMENT.** If there is a property within 300 feet of the property to be developed that has a surplus of parking that is greater than or equal to the amount a proposal would need to meet its parking requirements, a developer may pursue a Shared Parking Agreement. This requires an application to be reviewed and approved by the City, as well as letters of agreement from the owners of each parcel, as well as a site plan demonstrating how the demand for both parcels can be satisfied. This agreement can reduce a proposed development's parking requirement up to 100%. After the City has administratively approved the agreement, it is recorded and filed at the County. The typical processing time for this type of application is ten working days.

**Application Requirements.** Applicants for shared parking agreements are required to provide a complete Shared Parking Reduction application and fee. They must submit a site plan showing the location and arrangement of structures and the proposed parking configuration on both the property generating the demand, and the property providing its surplus parking spaces, as well as the distance pedestrians must travel between the two. Parking tables for each property are required, as well as the hours of operation for each of the respective uses, to demonstrate that either the uses are non-simultaneous or that the property donating spaces has sufficient spaces to accommodate the excess demand from the property requesting it. The site plan must also show signage indicating that parking is available for the property with excess demand on the property with excess supply. A copy of a signed letter from each owner outlining the terms of the agreement and their consent to abide by the agreement is also required.

# BEST PRACTICES

While Plan El Paso encourages walkability and a focus on multi-modal design, the personal automobile remains the predominant form of travel for most residents and visitors. As long as this is the case, the management of parking will continue to be a vital task for any municipality. Much research has been conducted to determine how local authorities can ensure the adequate provision of parking, and the efficient use thereof. The City should strive to employ the most effective means of parking supply management available.

The City currently regulates parking by use, most often by requiring spaces based on gross floor area. These requirements apply across the city without consideration of neighborhood context, property age, or (except in the case of the C-5 district) zoning district. Furthermore, since most minimum parking requirements were enacted during the post-World War II period, a time of suburban growth and expanding automobile use, they were calibrated under the assumption that demand for parking will rise continuously. This assumption is apt for suburban development patterns; however, it is a disservice to older, urban development patterns, where multiple modes of transportation have always been well integrated into the experience of residents and visitors. Planners, economists, and other professionals interested in urban development have put forward a strong argument that, at least in certain contexts, the “one size fits all” approach to parking regulation is not appropriate.

Parking, or the perceived lack thereof, is a concern that transcends class and demographics in places large and small throughout the United States. However, complaints from the public about a dearth of parking are often exaggerated; when potential users complain about a lack of parking, they are often describing a lack of what they consider convenient parking. It is not possible to provide parking for every worker or patron steps from the entrance of every office or storefront, and attempting to do so only exacerbates the perception of a parking supply problem.

Another condition that contributes to a perceived lack of parking is an imbalance between private, single-use spaces, and public spaces that are accessible to all users. Parking spaces that are private and regulated to serve a single purpose (e.g., parking for bank patrons only, employee-only parking, et cetera) inevitably will remain vacant much of the time (in the examples above, when the bank is closed, or on the weekend when employees are not parking at the office). These single-purpose spaces ensure that additional spaces must be provided in the area for other users, creating a situation in which the area can have an oversupply of spaces, while still failing to meet demand. The City’s current parking requirements, which demand that each use supply its own dedicated parking, makes this situation a veritable certainty in commercial districts throughout the City; when the City requires private developers to construct parking above their perceived need, we implicitly encourage them to restrict access to those spaces. The adequate provision of publicly accessible parking, through on-street spaces or municipal parking garages, is then necessary to offset the imbalance caused by minimum required parking regulations.

National trends in municipal parking regulation are trending away from municipally enforced minimum parking requirements. Urban Planner and expert in the economics of parking Donald Shoup explains that parking, particularly dedicated off-street surface lots, hurt a city’s bottom line. Parking lots generate less tax revenue than buildings, meaning cities lose revenue when municipal regulations require parking on every lot. Surface parking lots constitute a significant expense for both developers (the average cost of one space in a surface parking lot is \$5,000-\$10,000<sup>1</sup>) and municipalities, as the impermeable surface increases runoff and strains stormwater systems. The lost property tax revenue caused by parking minimums, along with the increased infrastructure maintenance costs, can constitute a significant negative financial impact.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, Donald Shoup points out that minimum parking requirements can discourage the adaptive reuse of buildings if the additional parking spaces required for a new use are difficult to provide on-site; as a result, the regulations have the effect of encouraging demolition of otherwise adequate existing building stock.

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<sup>1</sup> Victoria Transport Policy Institute. (2017, July 19). Transportation Cost and Benefit Analysis II – Parking Costs. Retrieved from [www.vtpi.org/tca](http://www.vtpi.org/tca)

<sup>2</sup> Marohn, Charles. (2018, January 4). Inching to Parking Sanity. Retrieved from <https://www.strongtowns.org>

Across the country, cities are working on solutions to address parking concerns. The American Planning Association (APA) runs the Planning Advisory Service (PAS), which is a service that assists APA members in answering planning related inquiries. The PAS has created a collection of documents in response to research inquiries about parking. Based on policy documents and municipal codes around the country, there are several trends in how cities address parking requirement reductions and exemptions. Popular parking reduction mechanisms include:

- Allowing proximate on-street parking to count toward minimum requirements
- Allowing proximate public parking facilities to count toward minimum requirements
- Allowing bicycle parking facilities to offset a portion of minimum requirements
- Credit for landscaping and other pedestrian oriented improvements or facilities
- Credit for carpool, ride-share, and public transit based initiatives
- Shared parking agreements
- Parking management districts
- Replacing minimum requirements with maximum restrictions
- Allowing developers to pay "fees in lieu of" construction of the minimum requirement

This list demonstrates there are numerous way to provide alternatives to minimum parking requirements. Some cities, such as Buffalo, New York, and Asheville, North Carolina, have removed parking minimums altogether, instead allowing the property owner to determine how much parking is needed for their development to be successful. Many other cities have eliminated parking requirements in specific areas, such as the downtown or historic districts. In this way parking supply is based on demand as perceived by the private sector, precluding the need for the municipality to impose a restriction or regulation.

# APPROACHES TO PARKING REDUCTIONS IN TEXAS

Planning staff researched the parking reduction practices employed by six other major cities in Texas. Staff reviewed each municipalities' parking reduction policy and process, including municipal code requirements, administrative remedies, and application requirements. While no two cities approached parking reductions in exactly the same way, El Paso's parking reduction policy appears to be commensurate with other major Texas cities.

## PARKING REDUCTION SUMMARY TABLE

CITY	ALLOWABLE REDUCTION	PROCESS OVERVIEW
<b>Austin</b>	Up to 10%	Administrative; reduction available for projects that provide bicycle, carsharing, or other transit oriented facilities
<b>College Station</b>	Up to 100%	Administrative Adjustment; up to 10% Alternative Parking Plan; up to 100% approved by the Administrator
<b>Dallas</b>	Up to 75%	Administrative; 20-75% depending on use <u>OR</u> Board of Adjustment; 25% with parking special exception (up to 75% for certain uses)
<b>Galveston</b>	Up to 100%	Administrative
<b>Houston</b>	Up to 5 spaces; existing use) 25% (new or existing) plus 10% for bicycle spaces	Administrative; up to 40% for historic structures; up to 75% for freestanding Class 7 uses (food and beverage)
<b>San Antonio</b>	Up to 20%; 50% with woodland preservation	Administrative; additional 10% for projects providing bicycle parking

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT EACH CITY

**AUSTIN.** No off-street parking is required for sites within the Central Business District (CBD) and Downtown Mixed Use (DMU) zoning districts, which covers most of downtown. Commercial developments located within the “Urban Core” are eligible for a 20% reduction in parking requirements by right. In all areas, parking reductions are available in the following instances:

- Up to 10% reduction if shower facilities are provided on-site
- Adjacent on-street parking can be counted toward minimum requirements
- Up to 10% reduction by preserving significant stands of trees or protected trees
- A reduction of 20 spaces for every car-sharing space provided on site

These incentives can be combined, provided the total reduction does not exceed 40% of the required parking.

**COLLEGE STATION.** College Station’s “Alternative Parking Plan” allows developers to meet parking needs by means other than on-site spaces. The Zoning Administrator is authorized to consider and approve any alternative to providing parking spaces on-site if the applicant demonstrates that the proposed will result in a better parking situation with respect to surrounding neighborhoods, traffic circulation, and urban design than complying with the otherwise applicable off-street parking standards. An Alternative Parking Plan must detail the type of alternative proposed and the rationale for the proposal. Parking alternatives that the administrator may consider include a demand based parking study, shared parking agreements, off-site parking (may be considered as long as it is within 500 feet of the property to be served) and providing additional bicycle parking and accommodations (shower facilities, et cetera).

Another mechanism available to developers is an Administrative Adjustment. Administrative Adjustments are specific deviations from otherwise applicable development standards when the proposed development is:

- Compatible with surrounding land uses;
- Harmonious with the public interest; and
- Consistent with the purposes of the city’s Unified Development Ordinance (UDO).

The Administrator has the authority to authorize adjustments of up to 10% from any dimensional standard or numerical requirement set forth in the UDO, including parking requirements. Any adjustment request greater than 10% is treated as a variance and handled by the Zoning Board of Adjustment. The application requirements for an “Administrative Adjustment” are less stringent than the application requirements for an “Alternative Parking Plan”.

**DALLAS.** Any proposed use may be eligible for a maximum 25% reduction in required parking by a parking special exception; however, the following three uses may request greater reductions:

- Up to 75% for Industrial (inside)
- Up to 75% for Commercial Amusement (inside), excluding dance halls
- Up to 35% for Office

**DALLAS CONTINUED.** The allowable administrative reductions are also larger for these uses:

- Up to 50% for Industrial (inside and outside)
- Up to 20% for Office uses and retail and personal service uses
- Up to 25% for Trade center
- Up to 50% for Warehouse greater than 100,000 square feet
- Up to 50% for Museum/ Art gallery

**GALVESTON.** The code requires that the City Manager, in consultation with the City Engineer, approve any parking reduction request. There is no formal application process, except that a parking study conducted by a professional engineer or by a transportation planner or architect with experience in parking analysis and planning is required.

**HOUSTON.** In order to be granted an administrative five-space reduction, the application requires documentation regarding the current and anticipated demand for parking spaces, in lieu of a typical parking study. At the discretion of the Director of Planning Development, up to 25% of required on-site parking can be accommodated off-site if the off-site parking facilities are located less than 800 feet from the subject property (when accommodating a use greater than 30,000 square feet in gross floor area) or less than 1,000 feet from the subject property (when accommodating a use less than 30,000 square feet in gross floor area). In either case, the Director must determine in his or her sole professional judgment that sufficient pedestrian amenities mitigate the impact of the extended distance of the off-site parking facilities.

A maximum 40% reduction may also be granted for a designated historic structure or a contributing structure to an historic neighborhood.

Up to 75% of the required spaces for a freestanding Class 7 (food and beverage) use may be provided by off-site parking facilities located no more than 1,000 feet from the property if:

- The off-site parking facilities are used only for valet parking services;
- Valet parking services for the off-site parking facilities must be available during all operating hours;
- At least 25% of the parking spaces required by the use are located either on-site or on off-site parking facilities located within 250 feet of the use; and
- The applicant or responsible party must submit an annual certification of valet parking.

An applicant can be granted a reduction for providing more than the minimum required bicycle spaces. For every four additional bicycle spaces provided, the applicant will receive a reduction of one parking space. The reduction is capped at 10% and applies to all use classifications except single family residential.

**SAN ANTONIO.** There is a provision for an administrative waiver of parking requirements up to 50% in cases of woodland preservation.



# POTENTIAL MODIFICATIONS TO EXISTING PARKING REDUCTION REQUIREMENTS

## POTENTIAL ALTERNATIVES/CODE AMENDMENTS

As the various parking regulation methods described above make clear, there are many strategies that the City of El Paso could utilize to provide the CPC and City Council with the information needed to make an informed decision. One change that may be effective in allaying CPC concerns is to require a more thorough parking study. The El Paso City Code grants Planning staff significant freedom to determine what constitutes a parking study; ensuring that this document provides a more comprehensive view of the existing and proposed parking resources around the subject property will provide staff with a stronger basis for its recommendation to CPC. Additionally, this is a change in policy that could be implemented in a relatively short time as it does not require an amendment to code. The City could look to the documents required by other Texas cities to develop more robust requirements for our own applications.

The alternative parking regulation methods listed below could help the City to better manage existing parking supply and evaluate the viability of parking reduction requests, but they would likely require amendment of the El Paso City Code:

1. Modify the administrative parking reduction standards to allow for up to 10% or 5 parking spaces, whichever is greater, to be granted by the Zoning Administrator.
  - a. An additional 5% or 5 spaces could be awarded if all proposed parking is shown at the rear or side of the property.
  - b. Greater reductions could be awarded for projects within a specified distance of a public parking facility.
  - c. Expand the circumstances under which an administrative parking reduction could be awarded to include additions and new development, perhaps including the areas eligible for Infill Development.
2. Increase the specified distance in shared parking agreements and parking studies to 1,000 feet or one standard pedestrian shed (1,320 feet) instead of the current 300 feet.
3. Instead of parking minimums, or as documentation to support a parking reduction request, require applicants to provide parking demand reports, consistent with what is required in other cities. These could be reviewed and approved by the Streets and Maintenance Department.
4. Introduce policy and processes to allow for Alternative Parking Plans in lieu of parking reduction requests. These could combine multiple strategies into one application to satisfy the demand created by proposed development.
5. Waive off-street parking requirements for uses located in historic districts or uses occupying lots less than 6,000 square feet.
6. Expand the 100% parking reduction zone into areas where there is a large supply of existing on-street parking or exceptional opportunities for shared parking agreements.

7. Change our current process regarding parking studies and the review criteria by codifying the requirements to provide consistent and comprehensive analysis.
8. Eliminate mandatory parking minimums and enforce mandatory parking maximums.
9. Allow developers to pay fees in lieu of providing all minimum required parking, based on the cost of parking space construction.
10. Increase the size of the reduction granted by the Zoning Board of Adjustment from 15% to 30%.
11. Adopt a maximum parking lot size that is equivalent to 110%-150% of the minimum required number of spaces for a use.
12. Eliminate mandatory parking minimums for residential uses in historic and/or older neighborhoods.